

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Please amend the drawings received on November 8, 2005 as follows: Fig. 1 by changing the lead line from reference character 20 to that as shown thereon; Fig. 1 by changing the lead line from reference character 22 to that as shown thereon; Fig. 1 by changing the lead line from reference character 30 to that as shown thereon; and Fig. 2 by changing the lead line from reference character 20 to that as shown thereon; all of these changes shown in red on the attached drawings. Attached herewith are “Replacement Sheets” Figs. 1 and 2, and “Annotated Marked-Up Drawings” of Figs. 1 and 2.

REMARKS

This amendment is in response to the Official Action dated January 27, 2006. In this amendment, the drawings have been amended, Claims 6, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15 have been amended, Claims 10 and 14 have been cancelled, Claims 16-18 have been withdrawn, and new Claims 19-23 have been added. The application non includes Claims 6-9, 11-13 and 15-23 with Claims 6, 12 and 19 being the only independent claims. Favorable reconsideration, in view of the above amendments and accompanying remarks, is respectfully requested.

On pages 4 and 5 of the Official Action, the Examiner has objected to the drawings for the reasons noted therein. It is believed that the above changes to the drawings overcome these objections.

On page 6 of the Official Action, the Examiner has objected to Claims 9, 11, 13 and 15 for the reasons noted therein. It is believed that the above changes to the claims overcome these objections.

On page 6 of the Official Action, the Examiner has rejected Claims 10 and 14 for the reasons noted therein. As discussed above, Claims 10 and 14 have been cancelled.

On page 7 of the Official Action, the Examiner has rejected Claims 6 and 8 under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Epp et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,882,137. These rejections are respectfully traversed in light of the amendments to the claims.

As amended, Claim 6 now defines the invention as a ball joint defining an axis and including a housing, a ball stud having a ball head and a sealing bellows which lies against the housing and the ball stud in order to seal between the housing and the ball stud, the ball stud having a holding surface against which a sealing surface of the sealing bellows lies. Claim 1 positively recites that the sealing surface defines a first axial dimension, the holding surface defines a second axial dimension, wherein the first axial dimension of the sealing surface of the sealing bellows is greater than the second axial dimension of the holding surface of the ball stud. Claim 1 further positively recites that the holding surface is delimited towards the ball head by a

shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for the sealing bellows. None of the cited references, alone or in combination, discloses or suggests such an assembly as defined in Claim 1.

Specifically, U.S. Patent No. 5,882,137 to Epp et al. does not disclose or suggest that the holding surface A5 of the ball stud 1 (as identified by the Examiner in the marked-up attachment of Epp et al. Fig. 2 accompanying the Official Action dated January 27, 2006), is delimited towards the ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for the sealing bellows, as recited in Claim 6. Accordingly, it is believed that Claim 6, along with dependent Claims 7-9 and 11, are patentable over the cited references.

On page 8 of the Official Action, the Examiner has rejected Claims 7 and 12 under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epp et al., as applied to claims 6 and 8, in view of German Patent DE 1575708 or Dorr et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,876,149). These rejections are respectfully traversed in light of the amendments to the claims.

Claim 12 has been amended to include the same limitations discussed above in Claim 6 and recites in part that “*said cylindrical holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows*”. (Emphasis added). Thus, for those reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 6, it is believed that Claim 12, along with dependent Claims 13 and 15, are patentable over the cited references.

New Claim 19 is directed to a ball joint and vehicle component assembly and includes the same limitations discussed above in Claim 6 and recites in part that “*said cylindrical holding surface is delimited towards said ball head by a shoulder which forms a generally radially extending surface adapted to serve as an abutment for said sealing bellows*”. (Emphasis added). Thus, for those reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 6, it is believed that Claim 19, along with dependent Claims 20-23, are patentable over the cited references.

In view of the above amendments and accompanying remarks, it is believed that the application is in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner does not believe that the above remarks and amendments place the application in condition for allowance, or if the Examiner has any comments or suggestions, it is requested that the Examiner contact Applicants' attorney at (419) 255-5900 to discuss the application prior to the issuance of an action in this case by the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,



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